

ART. VI.—*On the use of the Oxide of Silver in certain forms of Menorrhagia, with Cases and Remarks.* By J. J. THWEATT, M. D., Petersburg, Va.

THE preparations of silver have recently attracted considerable attention, especially in diseases of the mucous membranes, attended with undue secretion. I was led to try the powers of the oxide of silver in menorrhagia and irregular menstruation, from the high eulogy passed upon it by Dr. Lane; and the success which followed its use was so encouraging as to induce me to direct my attention particularly to its mode of action, and the forms of menorrhagia to which it is applicable.

My experience with this medicine has now been sufficient to induce me to repose great confidence in it when properly and judiciously applied. I do not pretend to claim for it the appellation of a specific, but I am persuaded that, "*cæteris paribus*," all that is claimed for mercury in syphilis, or quinine in intermittent fever, can be claimed for the oxide of silver in menorrhagia, in its different forms. It is eminently superior to the acetate of lead, and other mineral and vegetable astringents usually employed in this disease.

The oxide of silver is best adapted to those forms of menorrhagia which depend on an undue excitation of the uterine organs, unaccompanied with high inflammatory action. Cases often present themselves where profuse hemorrhage makes its appearance at the usual menstrual period, or immediately after it has passed; in these cases there is an extraordinary excitation of the nervous system. The oxide of silver here often acts like a charm: calms the perturbation of the nervous system, and arrests the hemorrhage by its astringent qualities. It should be given in large doses, and repeated at short intervals until some effect is apparent. Women after parturition are frequently troubled with a sanguineous discharge, distinct from the lochia, which is difficult to remove by the usual remedies. The oxide of silver is an infallible remedy for this pathological condition.

There is one form of menorrhagia often met with, which often baffles the skill and experience of the ablest practitioners to remove; and I know of no form of disease which tries more the patience of both patient and physician. A remedy, therefore, in which any reliance can be put, is certainly a desideratum. I refer to the too frequent occurrence of the menses. The quantity of the discharge is sometimes larger and sometimes smaller than it naturally should be; the intervals are short, and, in many instances, the patients are never entirely free from some discharge; exhaustion and debility are the usual accompaniments of this morbid condition; impoverishment of the blood followed by a cachectic condition of the general system; the nervous system is deeply involved; palpitations of the heart become a great annoyance. There is likewise a general depression of the moral faculties; the digestive organs are ultimately implicated, and there is dyspepsia in its multifarious forms,—gastralgia, pyrosis, &c. &c. Spinal irritation is of frequent occurrence;

the patient complains during the short intervals (when there are any) of dull pains in the pelvic region, with the sensation of weight or a bearing down motion in the uterus.

The oxide of silver is the only remedy in which any confidence can be placed to remove these symptoms. I have, under these circumstances, employed in vain the various preparations of iron and lead, together with the mineral acids: they afforded only temporary relief; but in every case in which I prescribed the oxide of silver, its action has been satisfactory.

I am aware that it is the opinion of those medical gentlemen who have experimented with this medicine, that it is inferior to the preparations of iron in those cases where the hemorrhagic tendency depends upon a general anemic condition of the system. This is the opinion of Dr. Lane; it is with all due deference to such high authority, that I express a contrary opinion. In this form of menorrhagia the true indication to be met, is the arrest of the abnormal secretion; this drainage of the general system. If we can accomplish this (under all circumstances) desirable object, we will have paved the way for the use of the ferruginous preparations, and the carrying out beneficially the proper hygienic regulations for the restoration of the health of our patient.

My experience with the oxide of silver induces me to believe that its main action is upon the capillary circulation, and particularly upon the uterine capillary system; that its powers are specifically directed to the uterine system. Its operation upon the nervous system is that of a mild and unirritating tonic.

It is almost superfluous to state that this medicine is entirely nugatory, if not prejudicial, in those cases of menorrhagia which depend upon organic lesions. It never should be prescribed in cases of high inflammatory action; until after the subjugation of the inflammatory symptoms by antiphlogistic means, when it may be administered with great benefit.

I am in the habit of prescribing this medicine in larger doses than usual. The only pathological effects I have witnessed from its use, in two grain doses, two or three times a day, were uneasiness in the lower bowels, sometimes attended with slight tormina and tenesmus. These symptoms were easily removed by an anodyne enema. They often, however, require no attention on the part of the physician. The usual dose, when intended to be continued for any length of time, is a half grain to one grain, twice or three times a day, according to circumstances: it should always be combined with a small quantity of opium or morphia. The oxide of silver blackens the stools.

Subjoined are a few of the most important cases in which I have employed this remedy.

CASE I.—*Oct. 1847.* Mrs. T., mother of three children; has enjoyed generally good health, with the exception of slight dyspeptic symptoms. For six months has been subject to an immoderate flow of the menses, which has weakened her very much; debility so great that she cannot take exercise without palpitations of the heart, with a sense of suffocation; anorexia; costive bowels;

condition of the system slightly anemic; pains in the pelvic region; menstruation irregular, frequent, and abundant, intervals eight to twelve days; does not believe that she is ever entirely free from sanguineous discharge; no pain during menstruation. Ordered her the following pills: R.—Argenti oxidi gr. xij; pulv. opii gr. i. Div. in pil. xij. One pill to be taken morning and night, bowels to be moved by enema. Saw her the third day; had taken six grains of the oxide of silver; the discharge was diminished. Says she feels better than she has for six months; appetite improved, bowels open. Ordered to continue the pills, mild nourishment, gentle exercise. Saw her again the sixth day; had taken all of the pills, twelve grains of the oxide; the discharge had entirely ceased; says she is as well as ever she was: the dyspeptic symptoms had entirely disappeared; general condition much improved; discontinued the pills; ordered a generous diet. She menstruated healthily at the regular period; has had no return of the hemorrhage; enjoys now excellent health.

CASE II.—Mrs.—, æt. 38, of a good constitution; mother of five children, last child five years old; health generally good; for eight or twelve months has menstruated irregularly, menstruation attended with severe pains in the back, with a sense of weight in the pelvis; the pains in the back continue with more or less severity, during the interval of menses; suffers very much from it; the catamenia occurs every ten or fifteen days, quantity not too abundant; lasts two or three days; a very slight discharge from the vagina during the short interval; all the other functions healthy; prescribed cups to the spine, rest; and one of the following pills night and morning: R.—Argenti oxidi gr. v; morph. acetat. gr. ss. Div. in pil. x. She took the pills during the interval of menstruation. I saw her after she had taken the ten pills, and found her condition much improved; does not complain so much of pain in the back. The sensation of weight in the pelvis had almost entirely disappeared. Directed to continue the pills; bowels, if necessary, to be kept open by enema. Did not see her again for fifteen days, had menstruated after an interval of twenty days; no discharge from the vagina, no pain in the back; general health excellent; discontinued the medicine and ceased my attendance.

CASE III.—Sept. 1847. Molly, coloured woman, of a sound, robust constitution, æt. 42, had had several children; was suddenly attacked, without any ostensible cause, with profuse hemorrhage. When I saw her, the blood was streaming from the vagina; pulse weak, very much alarmed; her menstruation had been regular up to this time. I ordered her immediately to take one of the following pills, every half hour, until I should see her. R.—Argenti oxidi gr. vi; pulv. opii gr. ss. Div. in pil. iii.

I saw her after the lapse of an hour; had taken two of the pills; hemorrhage had abated; was calm and tranquil; ordered the third pill to be taken. I saw her again at night, the hemorrhage had entirely stopped. On the following morning, I found her entirely free from any disease. Ordered a nourishing diet, and left her.

Remarks.—The above case was one of pure idiopathic menorrhagia, a form rarely met with. The case is a very interesting one, inasmuch as it demonstrated the extraordinary efficacy of the oxide of silver. It will be perceived, that the oxide was administered in two grain doses, and frequently repeated. No bad effects followed these large doses. The therapeutic action of this medicine was rapid and certain.

CASE IV.—*Feb. 27th, 1849.* Mrs. —, of a nervous temperament, been in delicate health for some time; was suddenly seized without apparent cause, with pains in the loins and lower portion of the abdomen, quickly followed by considerable hemorrhage; became much alarmed; pulse small and quick. Skin bathed in cold perspiration; pains in the back and hypogastric region, intermittent. Says she menstruated on the first of January, menstruated again ten days previous to the present attack, lasted only two days. Prescribed the following. R.—Argenti oxidi gr. vi; morph. acetat. gr. $\frac{1}{2}$; pulv. glycyrrh. q. s. Divide in pil. iij, one pill to be taken immediately and repeated in half an hour. (My friend Dr. S. A. Hinton here took charge of this case. I am indebted to his kindness for the following report.)

I saw the case after she had taken two pills of the oxide of silver; the hemorrhage had greatly diminished; was quiet and tranquil. Ordered the third pill to be given. Saw her again at night; hemorrhage had almost entirely stopped; pain in the back and abdomen relieved. Discontinued the medicine.

28th. Bowels rather loose; complains of pain in the lower bowels, with slight tormina and tenesmus. Prescribed an opium pill, to be taken at bed-time.

March 1st. Slept well during the night; no pain in the bowels or back, scanty discharge from the vagina. Prescription, a small dose of Henry's magnesia.

2d. The discharge scarcely perceptible. Ordered rest, and a bland nourishment.

3d. Doing well.

ART. VII.—*Congenital Phimosis.* By M. G. DELANEY, M. D., Surgeon U. S. Navy.

CONGENITAL phimosis is a more common malformation than physicians in general practice are aware of.

In hospitals devoted to the treatment of venereal disease alone, many cases are met with. The best opportunity, however, for the observance of this defect is to be found in military practice; and particularly in that portion of it which includes the examination of recruits at a rendezvous. Within the space of two months I had examined and passed at the naval rendezvous in this city one hundred and seventeen men. Of these, twelve were affected with congenital phimosis; and all but two were impotent. All had attempted sexual union, but two only succeeded, according to their own statement, which, judging from appearances, I considered doubtful.

The feeling of amateness was so weak in these men, that they had essayed a connection with women rather from a sense of curiosity than passion. I have scarcely ever seen twelve men with more ample muscular developments in all parts save the organs of generation. The respective ages were: 1 of 28 years; 1 of 26; 1 of 24; 1 of 23; 4 of 22; 3 of 21, and 1 of 18 years.

The penis was invariably small, or the size of that of a boy of twelve years;